

Swift water rescue teams train on Pearl River rapids

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By Steve Phillips - [First responders practice swift water rescue](#)



PEARL RIVER COUNTY, MS (WLOX) -

First responders from throughout Mississippi spent the day Tuesday practicing "swift water" rescue skills on the Pearl River.

The Mississippi Office of Homeland Security hosted the training exercise.

Such specialized skills are a valuable resource during floods and other high water emergencies.

The rapids at the Pearl River water diversion, known by the locals as "Wilson's Slough", is the perfect training spot for swift water rescue teams.

First responders in the water used their "passive swim" technique, to survive if they're thrown from a boat, while team members on the bank practice their rope toss rescues.

"Isaac proved that we really need some swift water assets. We had large amounts of swift water into our state when the creeks and rivers were swollen due to torrential downpours from the storm," said Danny Manley, with the Mississippi Task Force.

Along with serving on the task force, Danny Manley is Pearl River County's emergency manager.

"When the storm came in, we had three simultaneous calls going on, people on top of their vehicles that were stranded. They thought they could make it through; the water was barely over the road. And before they knew it, they had water in their vehicles and they were on top," he recalled.

Once taught, these swift water skills require frequent refreshers. Ironically, one such follow-up course happened just days before Isaac.

"Right before Isaac, we had just finished up a week long swift water refresher for all the swift water technicians in the state. So we finished up on Friday, and by Monday, some of those elements were deployed to the coast, Hancock County, Jackson County, Pearl River County, executing rescues," said Byron Thompson, the deputy director for the Mississippi Office of Homeland Security.

These Mississippi swift water teams are deployed wherever they may be needed.

In fact, there's a team in Maryland now, assisting with high water rescues from the flooding caused by Sandy.

"These teams are available to help anyone, anywhere in the country, at anytime," said Thompson.

The training exercise continues for several days. The first responders have set up a base camp at Walkiah Bluff Water Park in Pearl River County.

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